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Youth and global educational and career choices

Młodzież a globalne wybory edukacyjno-zawodowe

Słowa kluczowe: adolescencja, globalizacja, plany zawodowe, praca, przemiany rynku pracy.

Streszczenie. W niniejszej publikacji zaprezentowane zostaną rozważania odnośnie do planów zawodowych młodych ludzi w kontekście przemian rynku pracy, spowodowanych globalizacją. Autorzy poszukują odpowiedzi na pytanie o związek łączący przemiany rynku pracy w dobie globalizacji z planami zawodowymi młodzieży. Badania przeprowadzono na grupie osób w wieku 13–16 lat, łącznie – na próbie 138 osób. Wyniki niniejszych badań opisują preferencje młodych ludzi w kontekście edukacyjno-zawodowym.

Key words: adolescence, globalisation, career plans, work, labour market transitions.

Abstract: This publication presents a consideration of young people's career plans in the context of labour market changes caused by globalisation. The authors are looking for answers to the question about the relationship between the changes in the labor market in the era of globalization and the career plans of young people. The research was conducted on a group of people aged 13–16, a total of 138 people. The results of this research describe the preferences of young people in the educational and professional context.

Introduction

The many changes in today's reality do not go unnoticed in the context of professional and educational issues. Today, we can observe a significant increase in opportunities, both in education and in the working environment, an increase in the mobility of society and an increase in the availability of services, information and goods. The increase in opportunities can have positive effects in a professional context, as people now have the chance to realise themselves and their careers in almost any direction. On the other hand, however, there is a rapid change of trends and needs, which can lead to a sense of confusion, especially for young people facing educational and professional choices. In an ideal vision, these choices are tailored to both the characteristics and abilities of the individual and his or her environment, as well as to the needs of the current labour market. The question is, to what extent is this vision realistic? Because in order for it to be realised, the individual should have a broad knowledge of themselves and the world around

them. In the light of research, in the eyes of employers, people from generation Z are precisely those with strongly defined preferences, knowledgeable about new technologies, able to set boundaries and in need of new challenges, as well as quickly absorbing new information. In the context of the negative characteristics of young workers cited by employers, the strong preferences and even demands of young people are also highlighted, especially in terms of earnings, as well as the workplace and working environment itself (Muster, 2020, pp. 135–138). These studies, however, refer to young workers. An interesting issue is, the perception of professional reality, by school-age people and the attempt to identify their preferences, in the current heterogeneous reality, which will be addressed in this article.

Educational and professional changes in the age of globalisation

Globalisation and its effects have already been widely described in the literature. The current world is incredibly dynamic. In the past, important transformations took place every few generations; then, certain breakthroughs occurred with the life of the next generation. Nowadays, multiple leaps can be observed, occurring during the life of a single generation (Witkowski, 2023, p. 24). It is noted that economic and financial globalisation has essentially overtaken social globalisation, as well as scientific and educational globalisation. Importantly, all types of globalisation are interconnected and influence each other, acting as a feedback loop. It is therefore important to have a balanced development of diverse fields, focusing especially on science, which should be modern (Wilsz, 2014, p. 59). As Celina Czech points out: "only the education of children and young people can properly prepare them for life in the global reality and to take full advantage of its benefits, and consequently lead to the formation of the new society of the 21st century (Czech, 2009, p. 98)". Education, in fact, is one of the most essential developmental elements of the modern world, which is characterised by a knowledge-based economy and a learning society (Mirończuk, 2013, p. 36). In the face of such a changing reality, however, it is difficult to rely on reliable data, as today's current data are gone tomorrow. It is also difficult to make forecasts, as various fields and branches are developing both jointly and independently. In the face of such a multitude of external factors, we can try to predict something and await the appropriate verification by reality. An example of such a dynamic development can be seen in the development of artificial intelligence, which has caused quite a stir in the pedagogical environment, forcing rapid action, as described by Anna Janus-Sitarz (2023), among others. Globalisation has not only resulted in the rapid development of modern technologies. Access to them is also increasing, resulting, among other things, in lower communication and learning costs (Sporek, 2015, p. 56).

The form of work itself is also being transformed, as national economies are being integrated by intensifying their interrelationships, resulting in a highly interdependent global economic system (Golka, 2012, p. 137). Taking action at such a level requires specific competences. Nowadays, for example, knowledge of foreign languages is already standard in certain circles. One can therefore conclude

that there is a need to educate future employees, in slightly different aspects than in the past. A young person should therefore suck up certain competences, which in themselves are a kind of means of production (Gableta, 2003, p. 207). As Tony Buzan, Tony Dottino and Richard Israel point out, in the face of incredibly dynamic change, "in order to survive, every individual, whether in the business world or in other societies, will need to be creative, flexible, adaptable, quick-thinking, able to absorb information at tremendous speed, intelligent, aware and committed to developing their multiple intelligences (Buzan, Dottino, Israel, 2008, p. 15)". People should also prepare themselves for a wide variety of careers, slowly moving away from the model of one career over a lifetime (Taylor, Hardy, 2006, p. 23). The broader development and upskilling of employees, is not only embedded in the pattern of globalisation, it is also cited as one of its advantages (Sporek, 2015, p. 56).

It is extremely difficult to accurately and permanently identify the directions of change, but it is a necessary activity to be able to prevent its negative effects (Wilsz, 2014, p. 57). However, certain trends can be identified that facilitate an appropriate response. According to the Provincial Employment Office in Łódź, currently, we can observe an increase in the demand for employees who are highly qualified, have versatile talents, are in excellent psychophysical condition and are fluent in several languages (WUP in Łódź, 2013, p. 28). However, the mere possession of certain qualities or competences is not equivalent to a guarantee of satisfactory employment. Through the current transformations of the labour market, there is also a growing group of employees who may be deprived of certain employment guarantees, such as, for example: finding a job that corresponds to their qualifications; legal protection or its inadequacy; performing duties that have been previously agreed to; providing opportunities for further training; security resulting from employee protection or a fixed income (Szukalski, 2017, p. 266).

Nowadays, people find themselves at the centre of turbulent changes from an early age. It is a world of mutually clashing ideologies, in which life becomes a whirlwind, dragging in people who are less and less able to stay afloat, due to an upbringing that did not give them the right foundations for affirming their personality and creating the right mechanisms for resisting the masses' overwhelming impulses, fashions or ubiquitous slogans (Czech, 2009, p. 98). As some authors point out, one of the most urgent needs is the adaptation of contemporary educational systems, to new social, economic and cultural conditions (Olak, 2016, p. 321). The educational offer should therefore be adapted, among other things, to current market needs, thanks to which a young person completing education would have a better chance of finding employment. This may be the case to some extent. However, it is difficult to accurately predict the future demand for certain professions, since, due to dynamic developments, especially technological ones, it is possible that future desirable professions do not yet exist in our reality. It should also be noted that the direction of education also depends to a certain extent on the choices of young people. For it is difficult to maintain educational pathways in which no

one is educated. A low choice, or even a lack of choice, in terms of education in a particular profession by young people may lead to closing or hindering the path to obtaining the relevant qualifications. This, in turn, may influence the placement of a specific profession on the list of permanently shortage occupations. When young people express a desire to follow a chosen direction, they may find it difficult to obtain the required qualifications.

In relation to globalisation, it is also important to emphasise the extremely wide access to information, which, especially for young people, can have both positive and negative effects. It is possible to acquire almost unlimited information on different life patterns, both in close and distant regions of the world (Lewowicki, 2015, p. 18). The young person has the chance to discover information, about the educational and professional world, that was once difficult to access. On this basis, she may construct a career plan that is not popular in her surroundings, but has the chance to be to some extent personally tailored and rewarding. She may also discover some opportunities, such as studying abroad, which could be the start of an interesting path for her. This is a viable scenario, thanks to the international cooperation of various organisations and institutions. It should be noted that an increasing number of young people are choosing to seek their opportunities abroad (Banaś, 2022, p. 98).

With regard to the positive sides of globalisation, as some authors point out, its advantage is a sense of freedom. The present citizen of the world is free, in terms of making choices. He/she also has the opportunity to make them, through what modern society offers, manifesting itself in a huge and diverse choice not only of goods or services, but also of norms, values, life patterns or authorities (Dyczewski, 2009, p. 15). However, it is worth remembering that by making certain choices we will be forced to take responsibility for them. Almost at our fingertips there is reliable information available, helping to build a positive future and broadening our horizons enormously. It is important to remember, however, that there is also content in the media that has little to do with reality. The role of the young person should therefore be to choose and choose content skilfully. To do this, however, he or she should know how to do it. In the eyes of a young person, a certain piece of content may appear attractive, because he lacks the experience and education that would help him verify the content he finds. It may happen, therefore, that a young person wants to build his/her future on illusory visions that are not reflected in reality. As Celina Czech points out, "the education and upbringing of societies capable of meeting the challenges of the modern world requires a profound overhaul of the current educational systems. Many of the dilemmas facing education have no clear solutions (Czech, 2009, p. 98)". It seems crucial, therefore, to educate young people as broadly as possible, touching on issues of professional and working life, as well as social, economic, cultural or technological life. A young person should have knowledge of both himself and his environment, both distant and closer. He/she should be aware of the phenomena he/she is witnessing and their possible consequences for the future

reality. In this way, he or she will be able to consciously manage his or her life and make choices in response to the opportunities around him or her.

Results of own research

The implementation of the presented research, took place in the month of February, 2023 as part of the prepared master's thesis. The present research covered students of two primary schools and one secondary school, located in the municipality of Przedbórz. The final respondents were 138 school-aged people (13–16 years old). They attended the first grades of a secondary school and the eighth grades of a primary school. The respondents included 90 females (65.22%) and 48 males (34.78%). The aim of this study was to explore adolescents' perceptions of their future careers, as well as to obtain information on the influence of external factors on their actions.

The analysis of the collected data showed that in the context of the criteria for a future profession, the most important thing for young people is for it to give them pleasure (77.54%). One can notice a clear accent here towards realising one's passions. In turn, the smallest proportion of respondents indicated a profession related to popularity (2.90%). In the era of dynamic development of new media, this is a very interesting phenomenon. It is possible that young people do not want to reproduce patterns observed in the media, preferring to focus on their own development. Perhaps, they prefer to treat the media world as entertainment rather than making it their main source of income. They may also value their privacy, which interferes with this form of work. At this point, however, it would be advisable to delve a little deeper into the research issues at hand, into the current passions of young people. One can find publications in which young people declare a desire to pursue a profession connected with popularity (see: Durka, Kwaśniewska, Skrzyszewska, 2021, p. 4). However, this was not reflected in the author's research. According to a report carried out by the Organisation for Economic Community and Development (OECD), the most frequently indicated professions among young women are: doctor, teacher and manager. In contrast, among young men, the following professions were indicated: engineer, manager and doctor (Mann, Denis, Schleicher, Ekhtiari, Forsyth, Liu, Chambers, 2020, p. 14). In a study conducted in the United States, relating to the career aspirations of people aged 13–18, the professions most frequently indicated by young women were doctor, veterinarian, teacher and nurse. Young men, on the other hand, most frequently indicated professions such as athlete, military, doctor and manager (Hoff, Van Egdome, Napolitano, Hanna, Rounds, 2022). The research indicates that the professions most often indicated by young people, relate to activities, closely related to modern technology or social media, to a low degree. Perhaps, young people are more likely to target proven and socially respected professions.

When reflecting on their future education, the majority of respondents declare a desire to have higher education and to improve their qualifications (57.97%).

A smaller proportion (25.36%) is unable to give a clear answer. The fewest respondents (16.67%) state that they do not want to have a university education or improve their qualifications. It can be concluded that, in general, young people show great interest in developing themselves in an academic and qualification context. In a way, this corresponds to a vision of the world in which we need more and more new skills, qualifications, competences or entitlements. However, it is important to note the high proportion of young women in affirmative responses. When dividing the answers of the respondents according to the gender criterion, clear differences can be observed, as shown in Figure 1. Among young women, who numbered 90, most respondents indicated the desire to have higher education and improve their qualifications (72.32%). A smaller part (21.11%) is unable to give a clear answer. The smallest group of women (6.66%) declares that they do not want to have higher education or improve their competences. Among young men, who numbered 48, most of them claim that they do not plan to complete higher education or improve their qualifications (35.42%). A smaller part (33.33%) answered "I don't know". The least number of young men declare the desire to have higher education and improve their qualifications (31.25%). Perhaps, for young women, obtaining higher education and improving their qualifications seems to be a natural career path. They may also prefer professions where this is a necessary element for employment. Perhaps, young men also prefer professions requiring specific qualifications, but at this point, they are not aware of the path and requirements for obtaining a specific profession. To this end, it would be useful to deepen the research and discover the motives of the interviewees.

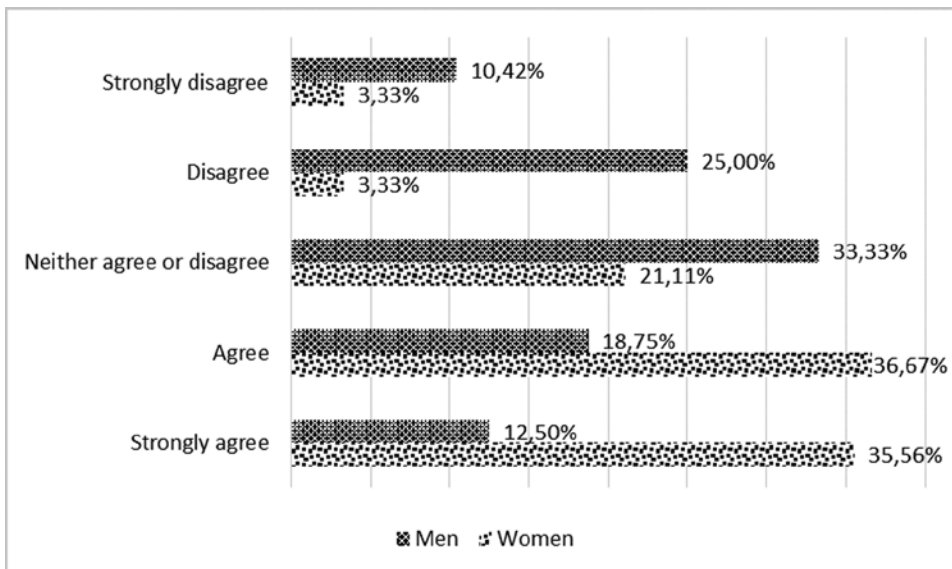


Fig. 1. In the future I would like to complete higher education and increase my qualifications – gender breakdown

Source: Own survey

Wide access to information from all over the world results in the penetration of all kinds of information relating to life, culture or customs of people from different cultural circles. A young person, in the blink of an eye, is able to find out about trends prevailing in a distant place. This includes labour trends. Today, the place of birth or residence determines the career path to a much lesser extent. Living in a coastal area is not a prerequisite for becoming a marine biologist or seafarer. However, as the survey indicates, the vast majority of respondents focus on choosing a profession that is popular in Poland (84.06%). A smaller proportion (15.94%), thinks about choosing a profession that is not popular in their country, mentioning, for example, professions such as archaeologist, anthropologist, musician or forensic doctor. It should also be mentioned that the respondents who declared their intention to choose a less popular profession included, for example, driver, programmer or hairdresser. These are currently popular professions, according to the survey "Barometer of professions 2023", the professions of programmer, hairdresser or car driver remain in the balance. The occupation of a driver can be found among the deficit occupations, but it refers to specific specialisation categories: bus driver and truck driver (Antończak-Świder, Biernat, 2022, p. 51). Greater declaration of choosing popular professions may indicate that young people prefer popularised professional paths, about which, perhaps, obtaining information is easier. It is possible that young people lack an inspiring role model, showing a wide range of available professions. They may also be guided by the transparency of the qualification pathway. These considerations, however, need to be confirmed by in-depth research on the motives for educational and professional choices of adolescents.

Through increased mobility and an easier way to work or even live abroad, this can also be an attractive career path for some young people. Particularly as many institutions are currently involved in international cooperation, which makes it easier for young people to gain work or educational experience abroad. However, according to the survey, the vast majority of young people consider only a temporary form of work abroad (57.25%). A minority declares a desire to permanently remain in their home country (31.16%). The smallest group of respondents declares a desire to work abroad permanently (11.59%). When making a comparative characterisation, taking into account the criterion of division by gender, young men, more often than young women, declare a desire to work outside the country temporarily. In the case of permanent work, it is more common for young women to declare a desire to work in another country. This is illustrated in Figure 2. Among young women, who numbered 90 people, the majority of respondents were willing to take up temporary work outside the country (54.44%). A smaller part (32.22%) is not willing to leave the country for professional purposes. The smallest group of women (13.33%) declares that they want to take up permanent employment outside the country. In turn, among young men, whose group amounted to 48 people, most of them declare that they have temporarily left the country for professional purposes

(62.50%). A smaller part (29.17%) has no such intention at all. The least number of young men declare their willingness to take up permanent work outside their home country (8.33%). Various aspects may explain these results. It may be that young men see a temporary job abroad as a chance to earn effectively and enrich their experience. They may wish to discover a new, unfamiliar reality, which has the potential to enrich themselves and positively influence their social, personal or cultural development. However, having gained some experience, linked to a slightly different work format, they wish to return to their country to build their, somewhat more permanent, professional future here. On the other hand, when considering the criterion of permanent employment abroad, it is noticeable that young women more often declare their willingness to take it up. The result obtained is puzzling; it remains unexplored whether this form of work is more attractive for women through, for example, curiosity about the world or whether they are more pessimistic than young men about the vision for their career in the country. Perhaps, young women see less chance of fruitful employment, or of fulfilling their dreams and career aspirations, by remaining in their native place of residence.

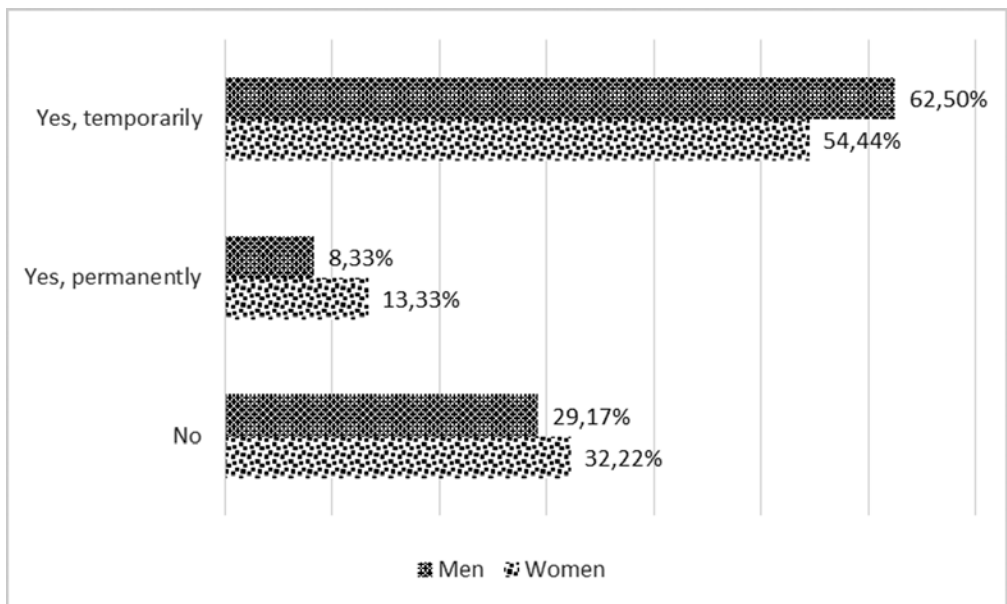


Fig. 2. I will work abroad – gender breakdown

Source: Own survey.

With regard to the perception of the role and function of work in people's lives, respondents' answers were quite diverse. To the greatest extent, they declared the perception of work, through the income aspect (20.02%). Thus, it can be concluded that in the eyes of adolescents, the main function of their future work is to provide a source of livelihood that will be able to satisfy their needs. It should be noted,

however, that similarly often they indicated that work is an opportunity for them to realise and develop their interests (19.37%). This may mean that young people have a positive attitude to work. To a greater extent, they perceive it as a chance for development, both of their passions and of themselves. Perhaps, in the eyes of adolescents, combining passions with earning money is a kind of golden mean to derive maximum satisfaction. The lowest result was obtained by the answer describing professional work as an unpleasant duty (8.93%); this is compatible with the high result of perceiving work as a chance to develop interests. Young people, in this context, may be optimistic about future employment. Perhaps they want to structure their future in such a way that they can turn their current passions into a liveable income. This is an almost idyllic vision of future work, which, as research carried out by InterviewMe shows, may prove difficult to realise in the future. In fact, according to analyses, only 18% of Poles are realising the profession they dreamed of as children. Interestingly, getting a dream job from childhood is not a guarantee of satisfaction either. According to the data, of those who are currently working or who used to work in their childhood dream job, 76% are satisfied (InterviewMe, 2020). This raises questions about the current state of affairs. Are young people able to make a choice that will fill them with optimism when it is realised? This may depend both on the content of the choice itself and its adaptation not only in terms of internal factors. It is difficult to take every possible aspect into account, even more difficult the less one knows about their very existence. The role of education is crucial here. For by increasing knowledge already in one direction, a young person has the chance to acquire information that can modify the perception of other factors. This, in turn, has the potential to lead to supporting the young person's development, which will have a positive impact on making more informed choices.

Interestingly, in the question about personal future work, the income motive was only ranked third, although it also received a high score (24.15%). This may mean that, in general, adolescents perceive general work more strongly through the income aspect. However, when talking about their own work, the most important criterion for them is that it gives them satisfaction (25.61%). In second place, respondents indicate the compatibility of work with their interests (24.80%). The fourth place, among the respondents' answers, was taken by the criterion of achieving prestige and high social position (16.89%). The least frequent respondents declared that their future profession should be that of their parents (8.55%). The aforementioned data is presented in Graph 3. Thus, there appears a vision of a young person with self-determined preferences, emphasising his/her individuality and being guided by specific values. Perhaps already at the stage of education he/she decided to determine what is important for him/her in the context of future work. When dividing them by gender, it can be noted that young men seem to have stronger tendencies to perceive their own work in terms of earning. This answer was indicated by them in second place, while it obtained third place among young women. However, when we look at the average for the respondent (on a 4-point scale), it was 3.25 among young women, while it was 3.19 among young men.

However, a significant difference can be noted with regard to having such a job as parents of respondents. Both in the context of women and men, it obtained the last place. It may be assumed, however, that young men are characterised by a slightly higher tendency to choose such jobs as those performed by their parents. This may indicate that young people in general have a low tendency to build their professional careers in the manner chosen by their parents. This may be due to both the availability of new forms of education or professions that were once unpopular and are now attractive to young people. Perhaps, thanks to their parents, young people have access to extensive information about their own parents' professions, so they may perceive more negative aspects, which makes these professions less attractive in the eyes of young people.

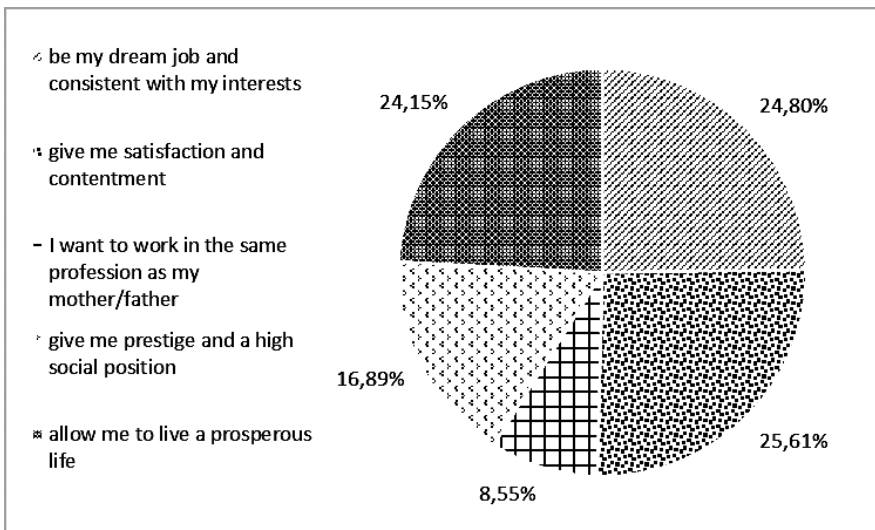


Fig. 3. My future job should

Source: Own survey.

When analysing the motives for earning money, the desire to satisfy one's own needs, manifested in the response "*I want to afford a prosperous life*" (24.14%), came first. This may indicate that adolescents have a specific vision of their future, in terms of economic status. Perhaps, they want to live at a level they define for themselves. Working in the context of earning a living is supposed to help them reach their preferred ceiling. It should also be mentioned that the motive of self-satisfaction was also highly rated (23.04%). This shapes the vision of a young person focused on achieving personal goals, independent of external factors. This is reflected in the respondents' answers, as the desire to impress others was ranked last (12.25%). This may indicate that, despite their young age, respondents have a sense of subjectivity with regard to their own lives. Perhaps they have done some analysis, resulting in the conclusion that no one else will be as responsible as themselves for their future lives.

A similar trend can also be seen in other areas. Wide access to the media and people working in them, who often build visions of an ideal profession or life, may result in the desire to build a career similar to that of popular people. However, as the results of the research show, young people declare to the greatest extent that they do not want to build their career by choosing a profession which is performed by persons popular in the media, both social and traditional (68.84%). A smaller proportion (21.74%) is unable to say whether they would be guided by the aspects indicated. The smallest proportion of respondents (9.42%) declare that when choosing a future profession, they will be guided by the fact that it is carried out by people popular in the media. Perhaps, young people are aware of a certain misrepresentation of the online content they watch. It is also possible that they treat the images they watch more as a form of entertainment than a plan for their own future. It should be emphasised that the general tendencies are very low, however, when dividing by gender, one may notice that young men, more often than young women, declare the intention to build their own careers on the basis of actions of popular people in social and traditional media. Among young women, numbering 90, most respondents gave negative answers (73.34%). A smaller part (20.00%) is unable to give a clear answer. The smallest group of women (6.66%) declares that when choosing their future profession they will be guided by the fact that it is performed by popular people. Among young men, who numbered 48, most of them gave a negative answer (60.41%). A smaller part (25.00%) answered "I don't know". The least number of young men declare that they are guided by the profession of popular people when choosing their own profession (14.58%). The above data is illustrated in Chart 4.

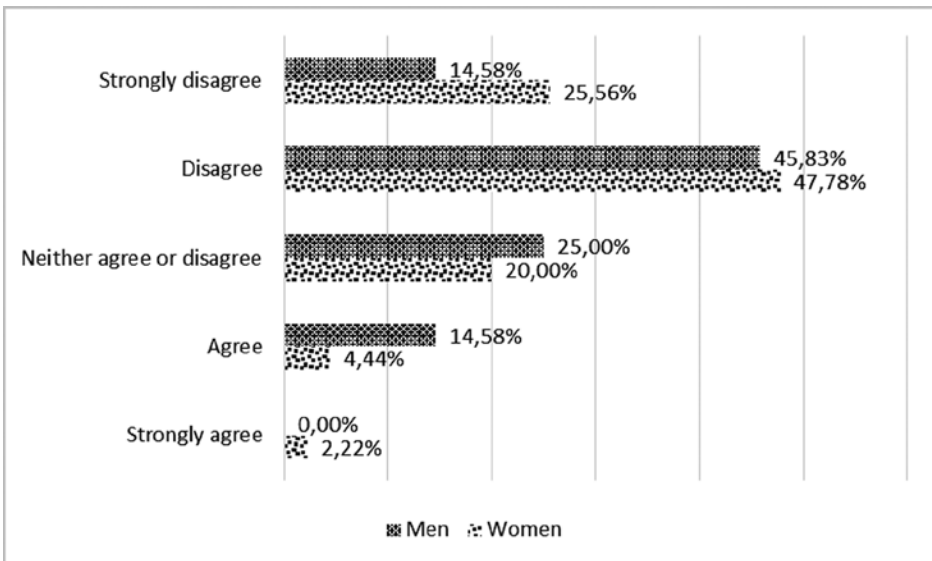


Fig. 4. When choosing a future profession, I will be guided by the fact that it is carried out by people popular in social and traditional media – breakdown by gender

Source: Own research.

The obtained results are puzzling. At this point, it would be good to deepen the research by supplementing it with descriptions of which people or topics young people observe most frequently, on social media. Perhaps the differences highlighted are precisely due to the variable range of activities of those active in the media. For example, someone may follow people professionally involved in travel and at the same time not be interested in such activities in their own life. On the other hand, someone may follow automotive channels and see this as their desired career. Perhaps young people, declaring their willingness to follow people, in their opinion popular, in the media, are precisely the recipients of such creators, whose activities are likely to have a broader translation in their standard professional life. Perhaps they also perceive the negative sides of media popularity activities, such as low levels of privacy and anonymity and over-reliance on current trends.

Completion

Today, we can observe a wide development of opportunities in many areas of human life. This also applies to educational and professional aspects. In order to make the best use of his/her chances, a young person should consciously design his/her career, basing it both on his/her preferences, predispositions and possibilities, as well as taking into consideration the possibilities of the environment and labour market tendencies and current social, economic and cultural changes. The above research results show that the young person looks to the future rather optimistically. He wants to realise himself and his assumptions and dreams. The question is to what extent he is sufficiently aware of them. Is he relying on guesses and illusions or does he have a reliable and broad knowledge of himself? For, as the other cited research results show, nowadays adult people often do not achieve these dreams. The question is whether our preferences change as we grow and reach adulthood, or whether the path to achieving our dreams is simply too difficult. Perhaps, relying solely on our own preferences and desires, ignoring external factors, to some extent pushes us towards gates that cannot be opened. This is where education comes to the rescue, which should be comprehensive and take into account personal characteristics as well as current changes, environmental opportunities and long-term forecasts. Acting in a multifaceted manner will certainly not prevent all bad choices and will not lead to the construction of an ideal future, but it can help to get incredibly close to it.

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